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BOTANICAL GAZETTE.

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THE TWO WAYSIDE PLANTAINS, BY ASA GRAY.—I wish to call the attention of Botanists to the Common Plantains of the country, and to make a public, though tardy expression of thanks to Mr. A. Commons, of Centreville, Delaware. I send you, here with, for insertion, his letter to me, which the date shows to have been long unattended to. I have in some way or other postponed its consideration until now, when the review of the genus for the part of my Synoptical Flora of North America, now in press, brought the subject directly before me:

CENTREVILLE, DEL., Dec. 20th, 1876.

PROF. A. GRAY: *Dear Sir:—*

I have a few specimens I wish to submit and request you would examine and name for me. Two of them are deviations from the usual form; another, a *Plantago*, is probably a good species. However, the specimens will prove whether it be entitled to that distinction. To me it seems sufficiently marked in its characters to deserve being considered as such. I will send a package in a few days made up most largely of the two forms (as I will call them at present for convenience) of *Plantago*; the *Plantago major*, L., or smaller form, and another, a larger one, which resembles it in appearance but distinct in character. This larger form is the most abundant and common one of the two growing here. The smaller one, *P. major*, L., being the rarer and less common one, and does not seem to propagate or extend itself so rapidly. A brief comparison of the two is given in a separate paper which is enclosed. In 1864, when I first observed the two forms, I had got the impression that the larger one was the *P. major*, L., but have since ascertained this to be erroneous. Others here, I am constrained to believe, may have previously entertained the same view. I infer this, however, because the larger form is here so generally common, while the other is not. Therefore, they are most likely to be obtained by them in making their collections, but it does seem strange that these two forms should be here growing together and have remained so long unnoticed by any of our Botanists.

The two Plantagos briefly compared:

Plantago —————— Larger, acute form.		*Plantago major*, L., Smaller, obtuse form.
Larger, smooth or hairy, generally smooth, light green, thinner in texture.	Leaves.	Smaller, smooth or hairy, generally hairy, deeper green, somewhat thicker in texture.
Longer, tapering to a point.	Spikes.	Shorter, termination blunt or abrupt.
Longer and larger, more erect and upright on the spikes, opening below the middle or ⅓ way from base and below the top of the calyx.	Pods.	Smaller, more closely aggregated and standing out more squarely on the spikes, opening at the middle and opposite the top of the calyx.
Larger, black, more acutely angled, not wrinkled.	Seeds.	Smaller, light brown, obtusely angled, wrinkled.
Very common and abundant here.		Rarer and less common.

Certainly a distinct species as the characters indicate.—A. COMMONS.

I have little to add except that the ovules in his specimens vary from 6 to 10, more commonly 10; in *P. major* from 8 to 18; also that the capsule in the former is narrower as well as longer than that of *P. major*, being cylindraceous-oblong, and a little over 2 lines in length; the seeds in the former are of twice the size of the latter, dull as well as dark and without the delicate reticulation of the coat which fresh and dry seeds of *P. major* exhibit. Finally, the sepals of the long-podded species are oblong, decidedly narrower than those of *P. major*, and all four, as well as the bract, more strongly and acutely keeled.

On looking at the older descriptions, I observe that the Plantain in question has been taken for *P. major*, probably by Elliott, certainly by Torrey, in his Flora of the Northern States, and by Darlington in the second (and most valuable) edition of the Flora Cestrica. The terms which they use in describing the calyx and the capsule may assure us of this. Mr. Commons remarks that it is much the more common species in his neighborhood. If my memory rightly serves, it is the door-yard Plantain of my natal district, the central part of the State of New York. I have it from Vermont and Canada (so that it may be the plant which Pursh mistook for *P. cucullata*, which is *P. maxima*, Jacq.); and I have small and slender forms of it from South Carolina, Georgia, and Texas, also from Southern Illinois. In short, it is the plant which first Hooker and afterwards I myself mistook for *P. Kamtschatica*. Although there are only four seeds in the pods of the slender specimens which I had formerly examined, there are commonly 6 or 8 ovules, *i. e.* three or four in each cell. I am sorry to say that the only published name applicable to the species is that of *P. Rugelii* of Decaisne, founded on a depauperate form of it. I should have preferred to have it bear the name of some one of those botanists who have evidently had it in hand, without knowing it was an undescribed species, probably indigenous to the country; for I find no trace of it in any other part of the world, not even in our north-western regions from which we have a probably indigenous form of *P. major*, or of the nearly related *P. Asiatica*, of which the real *P. Kamtschatica* appears to be a few-seed form.

Foreign Plants Introduced into the Gulf States.—With a few exceptions of those foreign plants which have found their way into this region from the Atlantic coast, or from the country adjoining south of it, their introduction has been effected through the seaports, and, as elsewhere, chiefly by the deposition of ballast from the shipping. In his exploration of the flora of this coast region, the botanist is surprised at finding, almost season after season, plants strange and new to him, arrivals from distant shores in different zones of the new and the old world. As will be seen from the following list, some are mere transient visitors, losing soon their foothold and disappearing entirely, like the West Indian *Melochia melissæfolia*; some reappearing again, after a lapse of years, as the *Mercurialis annua;* while others, adapting themselves more readily to the conditions to which they are exposed in their new home, continue to flourish and to propagate their kind year after year. Some species amongst them spread rapidly into the interior, becoming fully established amongst the denizens of the indigenous flora, and in extending over large areas of ground, covering it to a greater or less exclusion of the native races, add new features to it and affect decidedly for better or worse the economies of man. One of the most striking instances of the kind is offered by the introduction and rapid spread in the Southern States, during the last ten years, of the *Lespedeza striata*, whose history seems to be of sufficient interest to put upon record. Dr. Ravenel mentions first this plant from the *far East* as having been observed by him about twenty years ago near Charleston, S. C. Immediately after the war the rapid spread of a new plant arrested the attention of the farmers in that State and Eastern Georgia (Dr. Mettaur, 1865.).* The year after, the agricultural

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*Chapman, Bot. Gazette, Vol, III, No. 1, p. 4.